

NASA

Goddard Center Director's Colloquia

The Inquiring Organization

Practical Perspectives for the 21st Century

Marilee G. Adams, Ph.D.

November 13, 2002

Asking questions is the pivotal skill of the learning organization.

There's no change without learning.

There's no learning without questions.

Agenda

- The Inquiring Organization
- Power of Questions
- Mindsets for Questioning
- Exercise: Q-Storming™
- Q & A

Learning Objectives

- Introduce concept and practices of inquiring organizations
- Reinforce scientific question thinking skills for organizational benefit
- Distinguish questions that help progress from those that hinder it
- Provide practical applications of strategic inquiry tools

The Inquiring Organization

- Each individual values and utilizes the skills of question *thinking* and question *asking*.
- The culture reflects this in the way that everyone works together.
- The organization has formal structures and practices that support strategic inquiry in all functions and at all levels.



Question - Decision - Action - Result - Reflection

Blocks to Questioning

- Question Reluctance
- Assumptions
- Culture or relationship that discourages questions

Learner/Judger Mindset Model™

Judger Mindset

- Human nature
- Advocating
- Automatic
- Judgmental, biased
- Know-it-already
- Inflexible, rigid
- Point of view: only own
- Win-Lose relating
- Debate
- Feedback seen as hurtful
- Operates in “attack or defend” mode

Learner Mindset

- Human spirit
- Inquiring
- Thoughtful
- Accepting, unbiased
- Inquisitive researcher
- Flexible, adaptive
- Point of view: includes others
- Win-Win relating
- Dialogue
- Feedback seen as helpful
- Operates in resolution, & innovation-seeking mode

Learner/Judger Questions

Judger Questions

- What's wrong?
- Whose fault is it?
- How can I stay in control?
- How could I lose?
- How could I get hurt?
- Why bother?

Learner Questions

- What's right?
- For what am I responsible?
- What is the big picture?
- What's the most useful thing to do?
- What can I learn?
- What's possible?

Learner Mindset

way of being is based in:

* Acceptance

* Curiosity

* Not knowing

* Flexibility

Curiosity is our greatest
resource for *accessing*
Learner Mindset.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

**CIRCUMSTANCES
THOUGHTS
FEELINGS**

LEARNER

**THOUGHTFUL CHOICES
SOLUTION FOCUSED
WIN-WIN RELATING**

WHAT'S RIGHT
ABOUT THIS?
WHAT CAN
I LEARN?

HOW CAN I
STAY ON TRACK?
WHAT'S THE BEST
THING TO DO NOW?

WHAT DO I WANT?
WHAT ARE MY CHOICES?

WHOSE FAULT IS IT?

DETOUR
ASK A LEARNER QUESTION
TO AVOID JUDGER PIT

JUDGER
AUTOMATIC REACTIONS
BLAME FOCUSED
WIN - LOSE RELATING

DANGER
JUDGER PIT

WHAT'S WRONG
WITH ME?
WHAT'S WRONG
WITH THEM?

WHY AM I
SUCH A FAILURE?
WHY ARE THEY
SO DUMB?

CHOICE MAP

Judger Costs

Innovation

Organizational effectiveness

Learning community

Learner/Judger Exercise

Consider some current challenge.

**What Judger aspects or questions
(in self, others, or the organization)
could be impeding progress?**

Inquiring Leaders

Characteristic # 1

Inquiring leaders have an insatiable, non-judgmental curiosity. They place a high value on continuous learning and growing for themselves and others. They model question asking that is constructive rather than criticizing (Learner rather than Judger).

Inquiring Leaders

Characteristic # 2

Inquiring leaders challenge assumptions and beliefs. They solicit honest feedback. They are willing to suspend their own opinions in the face of new data. They are courageous and risk takers. They are willing to “not know” and “not be right.”

Inquiring Leaders

Characteristic # 3

Inquiring leaders *listen* carefully and thoroughly. Their listening is focused by accepting internal questions such as, “*What’s useful/right about this?*” “*What can I learn?*” “*What can I contribute?*” and “*What is the big picture here?*” Their listening is *not* focused by blaming questions such as, “*What’s wrong?*” and “*Whose fault is it?*”

Inquiring Leaders

Characteristic # 4

Inquiring leaders establish a culture of inquiry in their organizations. This is one that encourages and reinforces questioning and learning. These leaders mandate and reward standard practices of strategic inquiry throughout the organization.

Inquiring Leaders

Characteristic # 5

Inquiring leaders are committed to encouraging and teaching those in the leadership pipeline to take advantage of these strategic inquiry perspectives, practices, and skills.

Practices of Inquiring Organizations

- Question Map
- AAR (*After Action Review*)
- Choice Map
- Learner/Judger Mindset Model
- Q-Prep
- Q-Storming
- Others . . .

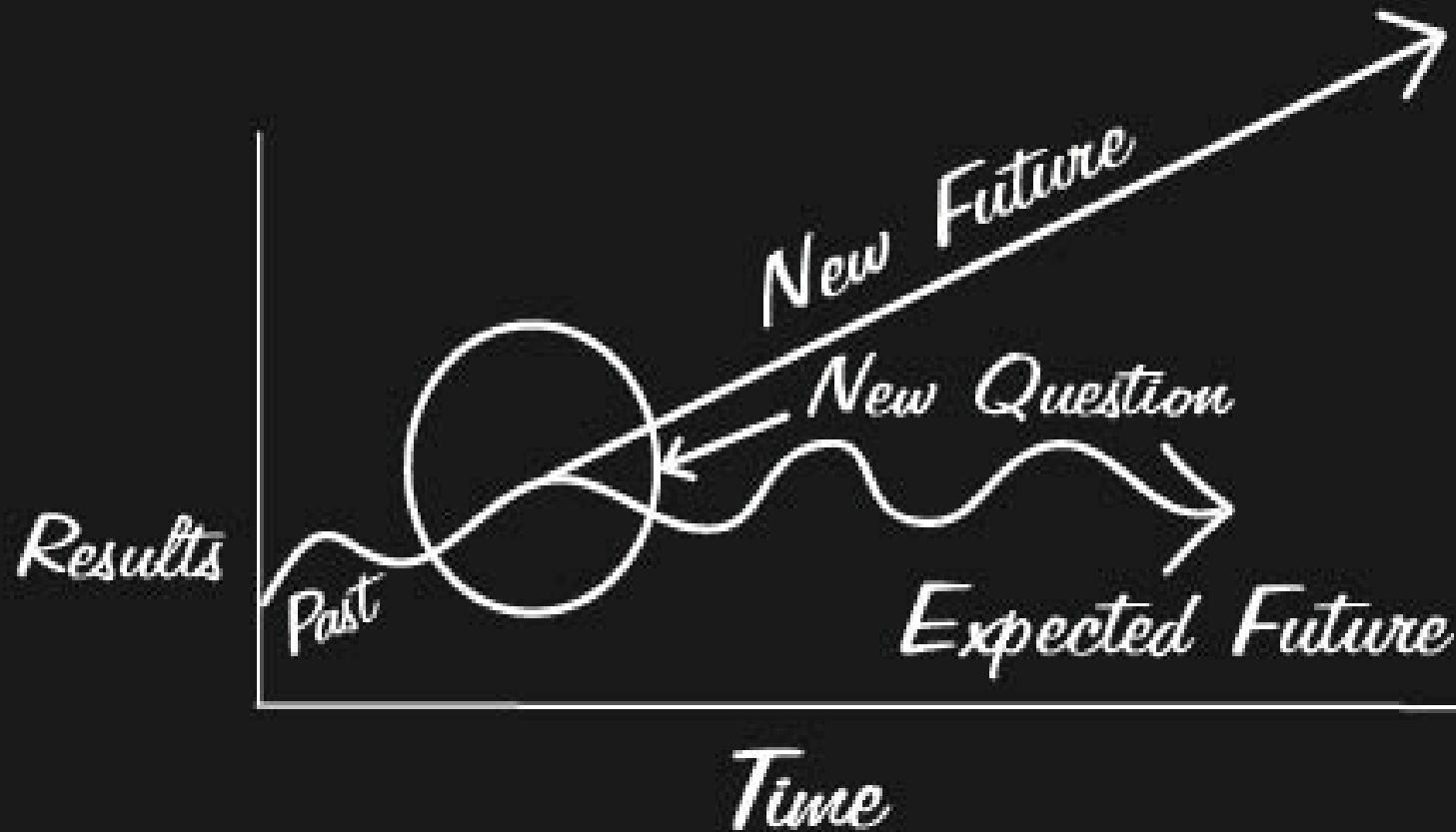
Question Map™

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three	Phase Four
Questions for Speculation Relationship Information <i>Open-ended</i>	Questions for Strategizing Innovation And Decisions	Questions for Action <i>Closed-ended</i>	Questions For Reflection AAR

INNOVATION—in ideas,
products, services, or processes—
always begins with a new
question, or an old question
asked newly.

A PARADIGM SHIFT occurs
when a question is asked inside
the current paradigm that can
only be answered from outside
of it.

CREATING NEW FUTURES



Group Exercise

Q-Storming

*Most any problem can be solved
with enough right questions.*

*A question not asked is
a door not opened.*



Q & A

Take-Aways

**“The important thing is
not to stop questioning.”**

Albert Einstein

InquiryInc

www.InquiryInc.com

609-397-9100

Copyright © 2002 InquiryInc Pennington, NJ